BODIE

Written by V. H. Larson

In years gone by, much was written and told of Bodie, now but a deserted Ghost Town. The cemetery there was always referred to as Boom Town, owing to the fact so many men were killed with their boots on over a card game or saloon brawls. Bad men all over the west were often referred to as "The bad men from from Bodie." So it was during the boom days when the population was near 10,000. Gamblers and crooks all over the west seem to flock there to fleece the miners of their weekly pay. Bodie was said to be the wickedest town according to population and had the distinction of being the highest elevated city in the United States, being I believe over 10,000feet. Freight was hauled by jerk-line teams, mostly eight or twelve horses from Carson City 100 miles away. The teamsters had good pickings as well as the farmers 50 to 75 miles away. The quartz mills as well as the hoists were all run by steam and the woodcutters did a profitable business supplying the mines and residents. All freight had to be hauled from Carson City and the old Virginia and Truckee Railroad was doing well. At that there seemed to be rivalry between Carson and Bodie. More than half of the people arriving on the railroad would stay in Carson only long enough to get the stage for Bodie.

The Carson Appeal was run by Sam Davis, a noted jester and the Bodie Miner Index was run by an equal jester, Jim Townsend, and many quips were exchanged by the two rivals. At the time The Appeal printed an article saying that a refined religious girl decided to go to Bodie, but before leaving and she thinking of changing her habits, knelt down and made a fervent prayer, then said, "Now, goodbye God! I'm going to Bodie."

In the next issue of the Bodie Miner Index, Townsend quoted quoted the girl as saying those exact words but in a different vain

as follows: "Good!" By God I'm going to Bodie." Then commented: "This she said as she thought of leaving the sleepy town of Carson to going to the roaring town of Bodie."

My Grandmother Johnson went to Bodie and built a rooming house in 1876, and my Uncle Billie Owens went there sometime later, rooming with Grandmother, He was battery man at the Standard Mill for many years. The quartz mills ran day and night, 365 days of the year. There were so many shooting scraps that it was a common saying that the undertaker got a man before breakfast every morning. There was no law prohibiting carrying fire arms and men seldom sat down at a card game without a six-shooter in his holster. Many times the professional gambler would graciously order the drinks to stupify his opponent,having made arrangements with an unscrupulous bartender spike the drinks and share the winnings.

In late summer of 1881, Father had driven to Bodie with farm produce and he expected to make frequent trips. Grandmother prevailed on him to bring one of us older children to stay with her for awhile.

I was nearing nine years of age at the time and it was decided I should go. I vividly recall while there of two men being killed and taken to boot town. While on this trip to Bodie I wore a pair of red top coppered-toed boots. The first night, we stopped at Frost Station on Little Walker River. I recall that we were treated to fresh trout both for supper and breakfast. That morning, after Father had his horses hitched to the wagon and gone up to pay his bill, Charlie Frost, a boy two years older than I threw me down, took my boots off and tossed them on a long, high stable and then hid away. Father, having no ladder, drove the loaded wagon around near the shed and by standing on the high spring seat retrieved my boots.

Father in reaching Bodie, soon sold his produce and returned home. One morning, while I was there, Uncle Bill came in from his night shift and said;"Don't wait breakfast for me, Mother. I met the coroner and I stopped by for an eye-opener at a certain saloon. The coroner and the constable were just locking the place. I am to serve on a coroner's jury."He changed his work clothes and was gone for several hours. Upon his return, he stated that there was a shooting scrape, that two men had shot it out and both were killed. One man had eight bullets in him and three different caliber bullets were taken from him, one a forty-four. A forty-four pistol was found behind the bar with one empty shell, denoting that the bartender had fired one shot. All witnesses in the saloon remained dumb, and this affair was just one of many but were hardly and different where four men were shooting at once.